

## CHAPTER 5

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF  
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOME AKAN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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The economic independence of women is a striking feature of Akan society and is one aspect of a situation in which women enjoy a high degree of equality with men and bear a large share of responsibility. In addition to their domestic roles, which are found in all societies, they make an exceptional economic contribution, especially in the fields of agriculture and trading,<sup>1</sup> take part in lineage affairs, in political and even military organizations and possess equal legal status with men.

The question to be explored in this paper is what this means to the women themselves in rural areas and to the families and communities of which they are members, in terms of division of labour, responsibilities and decision-making. Does, for example, a measure of economic independence lead to a greater sense of security; is it rather itself a reaction to the ever-present fear of financial insecurity? To what extent do women in fact have the same economic opportunities as men, and is social change tending to strengthen or weaken their position in this as in other aspects of their lives? Is their undoubtedly great economic contribution reflected in their control of property and their influence in the community; where, for example, do they stand in the power structure of society?

In the modern sector the education of girls has widened their occupational opportunities, and at the village level many more girls are attending school and aspiring to jobs away from home. What effect is this having on the role of the women who remain in the village? As more men move into cash crop farming or wage-earning occupations, the burden of growing food

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crops tends to fall more heavily on women, and they are left in the mainly subsistence and technologically traditional sector of the economy. They also tend to be left with the day-to-day responsibility of providing for and looking after their children in the absence of their husbands from the village, although this is not altogether a new situation.

The position of women in Ashanti has been well documented by Rattray (1923, 1929) Fortes, (1948, 1949, 1950) Tufuo and Donkor (1969) and others. Less has been recorded about woman's role in other Akan societies, although Hill (1963) Beckett (1947), Brokensha (1966) and Djan (1936) confirm the similarity of their position in the societies described by them. Many years ago Mary Kingsley remarked on the influence of women and wrote: "The old woman you may see crouching behind him (the chief), or whom you may not see at all, but who is with him all the same, and says: "Do not listen to the white man, it is bad for you". And Rattray felt strongly that the Colonial Government had made a great mistake by not recognizing the influence of women in Akan Society and by making them feel that the whole weight of the colonial power had been "used against them, breaking up their former pride of place in society and the state". He went on to say that: "I feel convinced that without the expenditure of public funds, we could by some official recognition of the Queen Mothers do more for the moral welfare of the Akan race than by the expenditure of £1,000s on a campaign conducted through the medium of the comparatively small number of educated African women", a sentiment that may now appear out-dated, but which illustrates his recognition of woman's role. Rattray believed that but for the "natural inferiority of women from a physical standpoint", and the taboos connected with menstruation, they would eclipse any male in importance.

Women have always been able to hold responsibility for family land and own property, and although their theoretical economic equality does not seem in practice to lead to the same opportunities to acquire property they do control substantial amounts.

This paper deals mainly with woman's role in the domestic group and the village economy, with some reference to the closely related questions of property ownership and inheritance, educational opportunities and achievements, and participation in community affairs. Data is used from studies in three communities, one in Akwapim<sup>2</sup> and two in Brong Ahafo. The Akwapim data is from part of a wider study still in progress, which included a census of households; particulars have been collected not only of those living in the village at the time, but also of all those considered to belong to it but living elsewhere, so that patterns of migration can be established.<sup>3</sup> The village committee was anxious to include this wide network as they wanted information on the total strength of citizens, and it proved of great interest from the point of view of concepts of kinship, not least by reason of who was left out of the enumeration.

The Brong-Ahafo Survey was carried out by five Social Administration Students during the long vacation of 1970 as part of a wider fieldwork assignment, which involved their spending six weeks in the villages concerned, and gave them a good insight into the general socio-economic background. The survey itself, however, was limited to the personal responses of a sample of forty-three women and must be evaluated accordingly.

The two areas are widely separated geographically and present many contrasts, being respectively on the extreme South-East and North west boundaries of the Akan-speaking peoples. The Akwapim village is within twenty-five miles of Accra and there is constant movement to and from the capital city. Moreover it is not, by village standards a poor village; its land is fertile, rainfall is sufficient, many of the villagers own cocoa farms in other parts of the country, and there is an inflow of cash income from relatives working in towns. Housing standards are not particularly good in terms of densities or amenities, although there are some substantial compounds; practically all roofing is of iron or aluminium sheets and a considerable number of floors are cemented.

Consumer goods such as transistors, tinned food, soap, talcum powder, cloth etc. are in evidence in many households and fish and meat are regularly marketed by traders from Accra.

Brokensha's "precipitating factors in change in Akwapim," namely Christianity and cocoa are both present, and so is education (1966:264).<sup>4</sup> There is a well-constructed Primary School built by communal labour in 1960, and a four-form Middle School in less solid buildings, a full complement of ten teachers, and almost all the children of school age attend for at least some years. Moreover, education is a high priority with the people and great personal sacrifices are made by some families to send both boys and girls to Secondary School and beyond. Although it is true that most of the older resident householders have no education, there is a considerable proportion of villagers who have completed at least Middle School.

Ten to fifteen years ago Community Development obviously made a big effort to improve the village. The Primary School was built, a Henderson Box was constructed to take advantage of the very good spring water supply, concrete street drains were laid, public latrines were built, and plans were on foot for building a Middle School, some concrete blocks having already been made. Community Development Assistants visited the village regularly, there were Adult Literacy classes and a women's Group. When I first visited the village in July 1970, there were no regular visits from Community Development personnel and much of what had been done was falling in to decay - the Henderson Box was cracked and the taps had long-since disappeared, although it was still serviceable as a water-container, the street drains were not really serving their purpose and there was widespread erosion, the concrete blocks for the Middle School were lying in a bed of weeds, it was doubtful whether any of the literacy had stuck, and there was not much evidence of the precepts of women's work, such as smokeless stoves or improvised food cupboards or racks.

The village has therefore been subject to the forces of change, and people have been quick to accept what they perceive as advantages. Iron and aluminium

roofs are practically universal, nearly all children go to school, use is made of motor transport as much as possible, appreciation is shown of convenience foods and other consumer goods, and young men and women have gone out to seek their fortunes in the outside world.

Both the Brong-Ahafo villages are close to small towns which hardly offer the attractions of a capital city, and the village atmosphere is less sophisticated. There is less seasonal migration, fewer farms in districts away from the village, and less evidence of consumer goods in the houses. With the exception of one or two people, notably the outstandingly energetic and "Modern" chief of one of the villages, who beats gong-gong with a loud-speaker attached to his car, the villagers seemed poorer than those in Akwapim.

#### The Household

In all village communities the routine daily tasks of cooking, sweeping, washing clothes and household effects, fetching water and fire-wood, and caring for children fall mainly on the women, and it is rare to see adult men taking any part.<sup>5</sup> They are helped in these tasks by boys and girls in the family, but it is the women who are responsible for organizing and supervising them and for catering for the family's daily demands for food, water, clean clothing and a tidy compound. These are time-consuming tasks and tie a woman to domestic chores for considerable periods of the day.

In the Brong-Ahafo villages a study was made, by questioning and observation, of the hours devoted to domestic chores, including caring for children, by different women. Estimates were taken of the time-span, rather than hours and minutes actively engaged in specific duties, as these tasks tend to be frequently interrupted by chatting with friends who drop in, or visiting nearby compounds. Estimated times ranged between two and five hours a day, a higher average being found in one of the villages than the other. This was partly due to a longer distance to the water supply, but also to differences in household composition, as it was found that widows and divorcees,

or those with husbands living elsewhere, tended to spend less time on domestic chores. This was probably not only due to the absence of the husband, but also to the fact that these households contained, on average, more adult members to share duties. The hours spent may not seem excessive in themselves, but have to be considered as additions to a working day spent on the farm. When this is taken into account the picture that emerges is one of a normal day fully spent in work of one kind or another, with little continuous time for rest or recreation. Indeed most of the women when questioned about what they did when they had finished all their work said they usually visited friends or relatives and chatted for some time before going to bed. Some said that they just rested until they went to sleep and one or two said that they did nothing. In a few cases women mentioned having discussions with their husbands about family problems and planning activities for the coming day. One of the three literate respondents said that she read the bible, and one respondent said that she frequently attended church services.

Non-farming days were mostly spent in catching up with chores, especially washing clothes and in travelling to Wenchi or Techiman or visiting more distant relatives. There was a woman's Group in one village run by the local Community Development Assistant (to which twelve out of twenty respondents belonged), but at the time of the survey she was engaged in catering for a group of Operation Crossroads Volunteers, so no direct observations could be made of her activities. In Akwapim the village schoolmaster complained that it was very difficult to get women to take an interest in a Parent-Teacher Association, even on their non-farming day, because they were so pre-occupied with domestic duties.

On the other hand the compound is not an isolated place and household duties are carried out in a cheerful, social atmosphere with plenty of talk and distraction. The women in a village may not have so much time to sit around drinking, playing games, gambling and gossiping in groups, nor to do so much travelling, but despite their time-consuming duties, they move

about freely and share fully in village life. Naturally they get tired, and they constantly complain of chronic ailments such as back-ache, headaches, aching limbs, chest pains and the like and as the well-being of themselves and their families depends so much on their maintaining their strength, for life indeed seems hard when they are feeling under the weather.

Apart from domestic services to what extent do women contribute to household expenditure, and how far are they left on their own with responsibility for providing for their children? In Akan society the children belong to the mother's lineage and her key role is always being stressed. There is much more controversy over the role of the father, particularly in practice. To consider this question it is necessary to look at the composition of the household, since much depends on whether it is based on a patrilineal or matrilineal domestic group.

A preliminary analysis of the Akwapim material shows similar variations in household composition to those found in Akan society in the past, although comparisons are difficult owing to the use of different definitions of the household. For our purpose, after a great deal of discussion with villagers, we made a distinction between the compound (Ofi) and the household or "eating group" (kuw). Where this group centred around a husband and wife living together or where the head was a widow or divorcee there was no problem. The real problem was to decide how to enumerate husbands who were living in the village but not in the same compounds as their wives. In most of these cases the wife regarded herself as head of household, even though she cooked for her husband and he contributed to household expenses; she therefore did not include him as a member, often saying "But he lives in such and such a house". Although demographic surveys have usually included these husbands, we decided that it was structurally more interesting to accept the wife's point of view and this is one explanation why we found a higher proportion of households with females heads than is usual, as can be seen in Table I.<sup>6</sup>

If single person households are excluded 41.6%

TABLE I

Distribution of Households by Sex & Family  
Status of Head \*

<u>MALE HEADS:</u>	<u>No. of Households</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Single person	23	9.5
2. Husband and wife with or without children	82	33.6
3. Father and children	<u>7</u> <u>112</u>	<u>2.9</u> <u>46.0</u>
 <u>FEMALE HEADS</u>		
1. Single person	25	10.2
2. Married	48	19.2
3. Widowed	35	14.4
4. Divorced	<u>25</u> <u>133</u>	<u>10.2</u> <u>54.0</u>
 TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	 245	 100.00

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\*The figures exclude the three Ewe families living  
in hamlets around Konkonuru.



of households consist of the husband, wife and children of the marriage, with in some cases grandchildren and other kinsfolk. Of one hundred and thirty "still married" women 65% were living in the same household as their husbands. This compared with a figure of 74% for the two Brong-Ahafo villages. Again excluding single person households, those with female heads, who were widowed or divorced, were 30.5% of all households in Akwapim and 27.9% in the Brong-Ahafo villages.

The married female heads formed an interesting group and those in Akwapim have been followed up in order to find out more about their domestic arrangements. Information about the whereabouts of their husbands has already been obtained from forty out of the forty-eight women and of these, twelve have husbands living in Konkonuru in other compounds, and twenty-five have husbands living in other towns or villages for all or most of the year. Many of these absent husbands own cocoa farms in other parts of the country and maintain other households there. The extent of migration of males over the past fifty years may therefore have led to an increase in the number of heads of households "Kuw panin" designated as women, but it does not seem to have led to more female ownership of the larger dwelling unit or compound (ofi). Only three female heads had their husbands living in the same household and all these husbands were strangers who had come to farm in Konkonuru. Therefore, as far as authority and position are concerned the husband is regarded as "head so long as he is living in the same household." But even where the married woman is 'head' and her husband is living elsewhere, she is not generally as heavily committed to meeting all household expenses as the widow or divorcee; this at least, is suggested by the Brong Ahafo data (See Tables II a & b). It must, however, be remembered that for farming communities most of the food consumed is produced by the family, so that the major contribution of women is clear. The responses in the table, showing that wives regarded their contributions in kind as major, are discussed below.

Questions on contributions towards educational

T A B L E II(a)

Major Contributors to Feeding costs by Marital Status(1)

Marital Status of Woman	Major Contribution to Feeding Costs								Number of Res pondents
	Self		Husband		Both		Others		
	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	
Married	1	26	30	1	-	3	-	1	31
Divorced	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Widowed	10	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Total	13	38	30	1	-	3	-	1	43

T A B L E II(b)

Major Contributors to other Expenses by Marital Status(1)

Marital Status of Woman	Major contributions to other expenses					Number of Respondents
	Self	Husband	Both	Others	No Reply	
Married	7	6	16	1	1	31
Divorced	2	-	-	-	-	2
Widowed	10	-	-	-	-	10
Total	19	6	16	1	1	43

(1) These data were collected from two Brong Ahafo villages.

payments (in Brong Ahafo) again brought out no differences, between married respondents living with or separate from their husbands, that could be considered significant, as in nearly all cases the husbands paid for education. In the case of widows it is perhaps significant that nine out of ten paid for their children's education themselves and in no cases did they mention help from their brothers (See Table I in Appendix).

In Akwapim there are more women with husbands living away from the village and it seems that many of them only receive spasmodic help from their husbands in meeting day-to-day expenses.

The number of households headed by widows or divorcees underlines a situation where many women are the main providers for themselves and their dependants, and are responsible not only for distribution of expenditure but for the production of income in cash and kind. That they have the support of their matrilineage is suggested by an analysis of the composition of compounds of the sixty widowed or divorced female heads in the Akwapim household census; fifteen were living in compounds owned by themselves, and largely shared with members of the matrilineage and thirty-six were in compounds owned by matrilineal kin, in the majority of cases the owners being their brothers. Ties based on matrilineality still seem to be important in the ordering of social relations.

To what extent does a woman's economic contribution and her central role in running the household lead to her making decisions about family affairs? This is difficult to assess, as views about who makes decisions within the domestic group will vary according to who is being asked, who is asking, and even to the day on which the questions are put. Faced with such questions ourselves many of us would be at loss to give precise answers. Given these limitations women in the Brong-Ahafo survey were asked questions about who made various decisions. It was intended to test whether there was any relationship between a woman's role in decisions-making

and her economic contribution to the household. As has already been shown (Table II) the pattern of contributions towards feeding costs showed such homogeneity that the testing of this hypothesis was inevitably one-sided, that is, little or nothing could be said about cases where women did not contribute in kind on one hand, or made a major cash contribution on the other, except for widows and divorcees, where different answers would in any case be expected. The one married woman who claimed that she made a major cash contribution did not in fact give distinctively different responses to questions about decision-making, her husband appearing to occupy a similar role to husbands in the sample as a whole.

Questions about decision-making were asked regarding sending children to school, deciding on religious denomination, correction and punishment, family size and discussion of family affairs, and the distribution of answers given to all these can be found in the Appendix. Although the questions are of rather different orders an attempt has been made to express the results in the form of a score, a high score indicating the woman as the major decision-maker, a low score the husband and an intermediate score indicating joint decision-making. The five indicators mentioned above were taken into account. In the case of all those except discussion of family affairs, two points were given in cases where the wife decided, no points where the husband decided and one point where it was a joint decision. In the case of discussion of family affairs two points were given to a woman who said that she did discuss these matters with her husband, so that there is no intermediate score, although in fact such discussion implies mutual decision-making. The maximum number of points is therefore ten, and the distribution of scores between individuals is shown in Table III. It can be seen that approximately two thirds of the married respondents have low scores of 3 or less points.

From the answers given to these questions (see Appendix) it appears that decisions about

education, and, to a slightly lesser extent, religion are very much considered to be the province of the husband. The questions about punishment were of a rather different order, as they were not asked so much in terms of decision making as of action, that is a) who corrects your children when they go wrong? and b) who punishes your children? It was expected that mothers would be involved more in correction than punishment, but this in practice was only marginally the case and the responsibility seemed fairly equally shared. As might be expected the father, either alone or jointly, takes a much greater part in correction and punishment when he is living in the same household as the mother. As for views about who should decide the number of children this followed a question, "Would you like to plan your family?" Over 50% of the sample answered 'NO' or "Don't know" and only one of these gave an opinion about determination of family size. A number of widows included this as a decision that they should make. (Perhaps, in retrospect they wished that they had not had so many children.) Of the married women who expressed the desire to plan their families, fifteen in all, four of them thought that the husband should decide the number of children, six thought they should decide themselves and five thought that it should be a joint decision. One divorcee, who said that she believed in family planning, thought that her brother should decide how many children she should have.

In discussion of family affairs with their husbands, women very much seemed to come into their own, especially in Akrobi, where all but two of the married respondents and all seven widows (retrospectively) said that they took an active part, and most of them gave examples of the sort of influence they tried to exert on decision-making. Women are naturally very much involved in trying to make ends meet, in providing adequately for their children and securing their future against want. It is not surprising therefore that a great deal of their attempt to influence decisions was in terms of saving money, working harder towards this end and for better provision for their family in the present. Objectives of saving were sometimes specified, several

TABLE III

Women's Domestic Decision-Making by Marital Status

No. of Points Scored	Marital Status			Total
	Married	Widowed	Divorced	
0	1	-	-	1
1	3	-	-	3
2	9	-	2	11
3	8	-	-	8
4	5	1	-	6
5	1	-	-	1
6	3	2	-	5
7	-	2	-	2
8	-	4	-	4
9	-	-	-	-
10	-	1	-	1
Total	30	10	2	42

Note: In the case of one respondent these questions were not applicable as she had only been married 3 months.

referring to house-building and a few to further education for their children. Some wives had made specific suggestions to their husbands about their work, such as returning to farming, keeping pigs, buying a cocoa farm, and in most cases they claimed that their suggestions had been followed, though in some cases the husband later gave up the course of action agreed. Fairly frequent mention was made about advising the husband to drink less or give up drinking altogether and in one case his failure to accept this had, according to the respondent, led to their divorce. In cases where widows mentioned having nursed their husbands for long periods before they died they also said that they had had to take all major family decisions.

These findings are not only based on very small numbers but on insufficiently detailed data about the communities concerned. The excuse for writing about them at such length is that very little material exists about how decisions are made in the domestic group, and the presentation of this data may stimulate further discussions and studies in this field. It is often thought that the matrilineal system of the Akan tends to lead to the irresponsibility of fathers, as the children are thought to belong to their mother's side. Certainly the household arrangements in many cases lead to a far greater involvement of the mother and her kinsfolk with the children, and in circumstances where a marriage is breaking down or has broken this may mean that the father does not see why he should support his children. On the other hand the indication is that the norm is for a father to pay educational expenses, to make the major cash contribution to the household, to decide on religious affiliation and to take part in disciplinary functions. This is expected of him, and so long as he is living in the same household as his wife and children he seems to live up to these expectations. Where a mother is left on her own through widow-hood or divorce, although she may live with her matrilineal kin, she seems to be the main provider for her children and take most of the decisions affecting them.

### The Village Economy

Apart from the value of the domestic services she

provides for her family a village woman contributes in cash and kind through her substantial role in agricultural production as is commonly found in systems based on shifting cultivation (cf. Boserup Chapter 1). Men in these societies often say that they do the hard work, because they undertake the physically strenuous task of clearing the bush; but in terms of hours of work put into the production, processing and distribution of food crops the women's share is greater.

None of the women in the villages studied regarded 'housewife' as her main occupation, even very old women describing themselves as farmers or traders long after their active working days were past. In the Brong-Ahafo villages all but two of the respondents put farming as their main occupation and this concentration on farming was borne out by enquiries into the time spent on farms. Without actually following all the women concerned to the farms daily it is impossible to make accurate measurements of time worked, and in fact this is information that is rarely dealt with from a quantitative point of view in the literature on agricultural communities. It is more possible to measure time spent away from the village, and this was the yard-stick used in this survey. As the farms particularly in one of the Brong Ahafo villages were some distance from the village this added considerably to the hours counted as farming time. Moreover the necessity to walk long distances meant that provision had to be made for refreshment on the farm and this further absorbed actual time spent in cultivating the land.

In the Brong-Ahafo village where farmlands were from three to six miles from the present site of the village (which had recently been moved to higher ground about a mile from the old site) the average times spent away from home on farming days by the twenty-one women for whom it was the main occupation was stated as 7.4 hours. In the other Brong Ahafo village where farmlands were within a radius of three miles, the average came to 5.9 hours. The women of the former village usually started for their farms earlier in the morning and returned



later; on average they spent over two hours walking, and allowing for meal breaks and resting on route the time actually spent in cultivation would be approximately 4 hours. As in the second village the women's walking time averaged little more than one hour the time spent in cultivation seemed to be about the same. Given a 5-day week this amounts to 20 hours a week of active farming, but 30-40 hours in terms of time committed to the process as a whole. But except during the season immediately after clearing the bush it is doubtful whether many women go to farm more than 4 days a week. It is unfortunately impossible to make any meaningful comparisons with the figures from surveys quoted by Boserup, as some of the sources do not specify what activities were included, and particularly important here is the time spent in walking to and from the farm. This walking is of course part of the distribution process as all produce has to be brought back to the village by head-load, a fact which must be taken into account in assessing the energy expended.

Separate figures were not collected for male farming activities, but it appears that the women were the main farmers of food crops, and this probably accounts for the fact that when asked who made the main contribution in kind to the feeding of the household twenty-six out of the thirty-one married women said that they did, three said that they and their husbands contributed equally, and only one mentioned her husband as the main contributor (See Table II).

Most of the women in the Akwapim village regard farming as their main occupation and regularly go to farm on at least four days a week. They set off, after doing their household chores, between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. and return between 2 p.m. - 3 p.m. The farms growing food crops are mostly within a radius of two miles, so that walking times are not excessive, and the fertility of the soil and the adequacy of rainfall mean that yields are good. Surpluses of food crops are produced and sold, although it appears that even more could be marketed and higher prices obtained if there was a better

distribution system.

The eleven respondents in Brong-Ahafo, who were engaged in secondary occupations, seemed to work, on average, marginally shorter hours in farming (5.5 hours as against 5.9 hours for one village and 7.0 hours as against 7.4 hours for the other) but as numbers were small and measurement not precise this difference cannot be regarded as significant. Rather it appeared that those with secondary occupations added the time spent on them, averaging three hours, to their working day. As some of these occupations, such as baking and frying sweets, were carried out alongside household duties it is difficult to separate the time spent on either of them and in some cases the total length of working day recorded, including domestic duties, was suspiciously long. For example one woman claimed that she spent 7 hours away at the farm, 4 hours baking and 3 hours on domestic duties, totalling 16 hours. Although this was perhaps an overestimate as a daily average, the interviewer of this respondent confirmed that she regularly rose between 4.30 a.m. and 5 a.m. and was still baking long after dark. Likewise a respondent who gave sewing as her secondary occupation claimed that her total working day was 15 hours, and her interviewer confirmed that she, too, was still busy after dark.

The production of cash crops such as cocoa and oil palm is more the province of men, and women tend to be at a disadvantage in exploiting economic opportunities in this field. The tapping of palm wine and the distilling of akpeteshie is also the monopoly of men. The remarkable responses of the Akwapim cocoa farmer to economic incentives has had profound effects on the village economy, one of which has been to shift the work of food crop farming more heavily onto the women. In some cases European administrators have helped to accentuate women's disabilities by concentrating agricultural training and land reform schemes on men. As Boserup says "The Europeans everywhere seem to have objected to the peculiar position of African women, which was so different from anything the Europeans were accustomed to".

Women can acquire individual property both by their own efforts and by inheritance and many women do hold substantial amounts. In the Akwapim village studied out of seventy compounds twenty-one, or 30%, were owned by women and of these twelve were widowed and five divorced. The average estimated age of women owners was 66.0 years, as against an estimated average of 52.5 years for men. It therefore seems that in spite of theoretical equality men have a better chance of acquiring property and at a younger age. Whether the position for women has deteriorated is questionable; villagers say that social change has affected inheritance patterns, particularly in the case of house property which now more frequently passes from father to son. This consequence of increasing wealth has been remarked upon by others and is discussed by Douglas (1969) in an essay on the future prospects of matriliney.<sup>7</sup> She agrees that matriliney is a particularly effective method of risk-spreading in economies based on rudimentary and unreliable forms of agriculture, but suggests that it is the emergence of scarcity of resources (particularly fertile land) rather than differences in wealth that puts a strain on the system. In support of this thesis she quotes the case of the Aburi cocoa farmers, who maintained the matrilineal principle by the purchase of family farms during the period of expansion from the 1880s to 1929, but after the depression of the 1930s tended to make separate provision for their sons.

Akwapim women, both patrilineal and matrilineal have been at a disadvantage in cocoa farming (In contrast to Akim women where, according to Hill (1963:11) nearly half the indigenous cocoa farms are owned by women, even though these farms are on average smaller than those owned by men). The adoption of new crops, particularly where this involves a move towards more privately owned land, seems to have favoured a move towards a patrilineal rather than bilateral form of inheritance, but more research needs to be done on this question, as the position is not at all clear.

Women have traditionally occupied a multiplicity of roles in Akan society and they continue to do so. An interesting aspect of this is that because, in the

village situation, the women take it for granted that they will work on the farm or in petty trading they do not seem to suffer from role conflict to the extent that married women workers do in western society. They are expected to work outside the home and no-one suggests that they are as a result neglecting their children or their husbands. They therefore do not suffer from a sense of guilt. Moreover the extended family system shares the burden of child-rearing, and although the bond between mother and child is immensely strong and enduring, she is not after weaning, necessarily in such constant contact as the more isolated western mother. A sample survey of school children in the Akwapim village showed that 36% of them were living with guardians, mainly grandmothers. This situation appears to be growing and creates problems of its own which need further investigation. Another factor possibly reducing conflict between the work-family situation is the sense of independence of a woman from her husband and her feeling of continuity with her own matrilineage. She expects to be a considerable provider for the needs of herself and her children and this also is expected of her by her husband.

Women in villages are beset by many problems and they are probably more aware of these problems than in the past. They are very conscious of their burdens and frequently talk about them. They wish sometimes that their husbands or their brothers would give them more support, that they would work harder or spend less time and money in drinking. Social change has brought new anxieties, many of them due to the disappointment of their expectations. They have made sacrifices to educate their children and then they find that the jobs they hoped they would get are not available, and that education has a negative result in terms of the young person's willingness to settle down to farming.

Social change so far does not seem greatly to have benefited women in rural areas. Migration has taken many adult males away from the village, higher education has favoured boys more than girls; rural social services have lagged behind those in towns. Whereas in the urban situation there is a trend towards the great importance of the nuclear family unit, in the villages change

tends to leave the woman, particularly the older woman, in the position of a holder-together of the household, and often, as well, of the family farms.

APPENDIX TABLE I\*

"Who pays for children's education?"

Marital Status of Respondent	Paid by							Total
	Self	Husband	Both	Uncle	Grand father	Other	N.A	
Married	-	24	2	-	-	1	4	31
Divorced	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
Widowed	9	-	-	-	1	-	-	10
Total	9	24	3	-	1	1	5	43

APPENDIX TABLE II

"Who decided to send children to school?"

Marital Status	Decided by							Total
	Self	Husband	Both	Uncle	Grand father	Other	N.A	
Married	-	22	5	-	-	-	4	31
Divorced	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
Widowed	8	1	1	-	-	-	-	10
Total	8	24	6	-	-	-	5	43

\* The data in all the Appendices were collected from two villages in Brong Ahafo.

APPENDIX TABLE III

"Who decides on religious denomination of children?"

Marital Status	Decided by						Total
	Self	Father	Both	Other	NA	DK.	
Married	2	22	4	-	2	1	31
Divorced	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Widowed	5	2	3	-	-	-	10
Total	8	24	7	-	3	1	43

APPENDIX TABLE IV

"Who helps Children with day-to-day activities?"

Respondents living in same house hold as Husband or not	Children helped by					Total
	Self	Father	Both	Others	NA. or NK	
Yes	23	-	-	-	-	23
No	17	-	-	-	3	20
Total	40	-	-	-	3	43

APPENDIX TABLE V

"Who corrects children?"

Domestic arrangement of woman	Children corrected by					Total
	Self	Father	Both	Others	NA.or NK.	
Living with Husband	4	8	11	-	-	23
Not living with Husband	14	1	3	-	2	20
Total	18	9	14	-	2	43

APPENDIX TABLE VI

"Who punishes children?"

Domestic arrangement of woman	Children Punished by					Total
	Self	Father	Both	Others	NA	
Living with Husband	2	8	13	-	-	23
Not living with Husband	10	1	4	3	2	20
Total	12	9	17	3	2	43



APPENDIX TABLE VII

Village	"Would you like to plan your family?"				Total
	Yes	No	DK.	NA	
Village A	8	10	2	-	20
Village B	12	9	2	-	23
Total	20	19	4	-	43

APPENDIX TABLE VIII

Village	"Who should decide the number of children?"						Total
	Husband	Self	Both	Other	DK.	NA.	
Village A	1	5	1	1	7	5	20
Village B	3	6	4	-	-	10	23
Total	4	11	5	1	7	15	43

## Notes

1. In Ghana as a whole (1960 census) women accounted for approximately 37% of the labour force in agriculture, and 80% in trade and commerce. This is high by international standards, as is shown by comparison with a few examples quoted by Boserup, 1970.

Women as % of Total labour force in

	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Trade</u>
Sierra Leone	42	47
Columbia	4	26
U.A.R.	4	6
Phillipines	21	51
Pakistan	15	2
India	30	11

2. An area described by Goody (1969) as one of interpenetration, due to the close proximity of matrilineal and patrilineal systems.
3. Our census includes more than twice as many people as those currently "normally resident" in the village.
4. A Methodist Mission was established in about 1880 and although the Mission House has now been taken over by the Middle School and there is only a Catechist in the village, there is still an active Methodist Community. The original school was started by the Mission.
5. Exceptions to this observed have been younger men ironing their clothes; fathers playing with their children, particularly with young babies, and also taking older children to farm with them.
6. An additional reason for this is the predominance of women in the adult population of the Akwapim-village of those 18 and over they accounted for 66% in our census.
7. See also Goody, 1962; Murdock, 1949; Hill 1963: 116-17 & 164.

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